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by A. MERRITT

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THE WOMAN OF THE WOOD

by A. MERRITT

Titans of Science Fiction presents

Farnsworth Wright,
Editor of Weird Tales

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by David H. Keller, M. D.

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The Woman of the Wood

by A. MERRITT

MCKAY sat on the balcony of the little inn that squatted like a brown gnome among the pines that clothed the eastern shore of the lake.

It was a small and lonely lake high up on the Vosges; and yet the word "lonely" is not just the one to tag its spirit; rather was it aloof, withdrawn. The mountains came down on every side, making a vast tree-lined bowl that seemed filled, when McKay first saw it, with a still wine of peace.

McKay had worn the wings with honor in the World War. And as a bird loves the trees, so did McKay love them. They were to him not merely trunks and roots, branches and leaves; they were personalities. He was acutely aware of character differences even among the same species -- that pine was jolly and benevolent; that one austere, monkish; there stood a swaggering bravo and there a sage wrapped in green meditation; that birch was a wanton -- the one beside her virginal, still a dream.

The war had sapped McKay, nerve, brain and soul. Through all the years that had passed the wound had kept open. But now, as he slid his car down the side of the great green bowl, he felt its peace reach out to him; caress and quiet him; promise him healing. He seemed to drift like a falling leaf through the cathedralized woods; to be cradled by the hands of the trees.

McKay had stopped at the little gnome of the inn; and there he had lingered, day after day, week after week.

The trees had nursed him; soft whisperings of the leaves, slow chant of the needled pines, had first deadened, then driven from him the re-echoing clamor of the war and its sorrow. The open wound of his spirit

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had closed under their healing; had closed and become scars; and then even the scars had been covered and buried, as the scars on Earth's breast are covered and buried beneath the falling leaves of autumn. The trees had laid healing hands upon his eyes. He had sucked strength from the green breasts of the hills.

As that strength flowed back to him, McKay grew aware that the place was -- troubled; that there was ferment of fear within it.

It was as though the trees had waited until he himself had become whole before they made their own unrest known to him. But now they were trying to tell him something; there was a shrillness as of apprehension, of anger, in the whispering of the leaves, the needled chanting of the pines.

And it was this that had kept McKay at the inn a definite consciousness of appeal. He strained his ears to catch words in the rustling branches, words that trembled on the brink of his human understanding.

Never did they cross that brink.

Gradually he had focused himself, so he believed, to the point of the valley's unease.

On all the shores of the lake there were hut two dwellings. One was the inn, and around the inn the trees clustered protectively; confidently; friendly. It was as though they had not only accepted it, but had made it part of themselves.

Not so was it of the other habitation. Once it had been the hunting lodge of long-dead lords; now it was half-ruined, forlorn. It lay across the lake almost exactly opposite the inn and back upon the slope a half-mile from the shore. Once there had been fat fields around it and a fair orchard.

The forest had marched down upon fields

and lodge. Here and there scattered pines and poplars stood like soldiers guarding some outpost; scouting parties of saplings lurked among the quant, broken fruit trees. But the forest had not had its way unchecked; ragged stumps showed where those who dwelt in the old house had cut down the invaders; blackened patches showed where they had fired the woods.

Here was the center of the conflict. Here the green folk of the forest were both menaced and menacing; at war.

The lodge was a fortress beleaguered by the trees, a fortress whose garrison sallied forth with ax and torch to take their besiegers.

Yet McKay sensed a slow, inexorable pressing on of the forest; he saw it as an army ever filling the gaps in its enclosing ranks, shooting its seeds into the cleared places, sending its roots out to sap them; and armed always with a crushing patience. He had the impression of constant regard, of watchfulness, as though night and day the forest kept myriads of eyes upon the lodge; inexorably, not to be swerved from its purpose. He had spoken of this impression to the innkeeper and his wife, and they had looked at him, oddly.

"Old Polleau does not love the trees, no," the old man had said. "No, nor do his two sons. They do not love the trees--and very certainly the trees do not love them."

BETWEEN the lodge and the shore, marching down to the verge of the lake was a singularly beautiful little coppice of silver hitches and firs. This coppice stretched for perhaps a quarter of a mile; it was not more than a hundred feet or two in depth, and not alone the beauty of its trees but their curious grouping vividly aroused McKay's interest. At each end were a dozen or more of the glistening, needled firs, not clustered but spread out as though in open marching order; at widely spaced intervals along its other two sides paced single

firs. The hitches, slender and delicate, grew within the guard of these sturdier trees, yet not so thickly as to crowd one another.

To McKay the silver hitches were for all the world like some gay caravan of lovely demoiselles under the protection of debonaire knights. With that odd other sense of his he saw the other hitches as delectable damsels, merry and laughing - the pines as lovers, troubadours in green needled mail. And when the winds blew and the *crests* of the trees bent under them, it was as though dainty demoiselles picked up fluttering, leafy skirts, bent leafy hoods and danced while the knights of the firs drew closer round them, locked arms and danced with them to the roaring horns of the winds. At such times he almost heard sweet laughter from the hitches, shoutings from the firs.

Of all the trees in that place McKay loved best this little wood. He had rowed across and rested in its shade, had dreamed there and, dreaming, had heard again echoes of the sweet elfin laughter. Eyes closed, he had heard mysterious whisperings and the sound of dancing feet light as falling leaves; had taken dream-draft of that gayety which was the soul of the little wood.

Two days ago he had seen Polleau and his two sons. McKay had lain dreaming in the coppice all that afternoon. As dusk began to fall he had reluctantly arisen and began to row back to the inn. When he had been a few hundred feet from shore three men had come out from the trees and had stood watching him -- three grim powerful men taller than the average French peasant.

He had called a friendly greeting to them, but they had not answered it; had stood there, scowling. Then as he bent again to his oars, one of the sons had raised a hatchet and had driven it savagely into the trunk of a slim birch. McKay thought he heard a thin, wailing cry from the stricken tree, a sigh from all the little wood.

He had felt as if the keen edge had bitten into his own flesh.

"Stop that!" he had cried. "Stop it, damn you!"

For answer Polleau's son had struck again -- and never had McKay seen hate etched so deep as on his face as he struck. Cursing, a killing rage in his heart, McKay had swung the boat around, raced back to shore. He had heard the hatchet strike again and again and, close now to shore, had heard a crackling and over it once more the thin, high wailing. He had turned to look.

The hirsch was tottering, was falling. Close beside it grew one of the firs, and, as the smaller tree crashed over, it dropped upon this fir like a fainting maid into the arms of her lover. And as it lay and trembled there, one of the branches of the other tree slipped from under it, whipped out and smote the hatchet-wielder a crushing blow upon the head, sending him to earth.

It had been, of course, only the chance blow of a bough, bent by pressure of the fallen trunk and then released as that had slipped down. Of course -- yet there had been such suggestion of conscious action in the branch's recoil, so much of bitter anger in it; so much, in truth, had it been like a purposeful blow that McKay felt an eerie pricking of his scalp; his heart missed a beat.

For a moment Polleau and the standing son had stared at the sturdy fir with the silvery birch lying upon its green breast. Folded in and shielded by its needled boughs as though -- again the swift impression came to McKay -- as though it were a wounded maid stretched on breast, in arms, of knightly lover. For a long moment father and son had stared.

Then, still wordless but with that same bitter hatred in both their faces, they had stooped and picked up the other and, with his arms around the neck of each, had borne him limply away.

MCKAY, sitting on the balcony of the inn that morning, went over and over that scene; realized more and more clearly the

human aspect of fallen hirsch and claspings of fir, and the conscious deliberateness of the latter's blow. During the two days that had elapsed since then, he had felt the unease of the trees increase, their whispering appeal become more urgent.

What were they trying to tell him? What did they want him to do?

Troubled, he stared across the lake, trying to pierce the mists that hung over it and hid the opposite shore. And suddenly it seemed that he heard the cypice calling him, felt it pull the point of his attention toward it irresistibly, as the lodestone swings and holds the compass needle.

The cypice called him; it bade him come.

McKay obeyed the command; he arose and walked down to the boat landing; he stepped into his skiff and began to row across the lake. As his oars touched the water his trouble fell from him. In its place flowed peace and a curious exaltation.

The mists were thick upon the lake. There was no breath of wind, yet the mists billowed and drifted, shook and contained under the touch of unfelt airy hands.

They were alive -- the mists; they formed themselves into fantastic palaces past whose opalescent facades he flew; they built themselves into hills and valleys and circled plains whose floors were rippling silk. Tiny rainbows gleamed out among them, and upon the water prismatic patches shone and spread like spilled wine of opals. He had the illusion of vast distances -- the hillocks of mist were real mountains, the valleys between them were not illusory. He was a colossus cleaving through some elfin world. A trout broke, and it was like Leviathan leaping from the fathomless deep. Around the arc of the fish's body rainbows interlaced and then dissolved into rain of softly gleaming gems -- diamonds in dance with sapphires, flame-hearted rubies, pearls with shimmering souls of rose. The fish vanished, diving cleanly without sound; the

jeweled bows vanished with it; a tiny irised whirlpool swirled for an instant where trout and flashing arcs had been.

Nowhere was there sound. He let his oars drop and leaned forward, drifting. In the silence, before him and around him, he felt opening the gateways of an unknown world.

And suddenly he heard the sound of voices, many voices; faint at first and murmurous. Louder they became, swiftly; women's voices sweet and lilting and mingled with them the deeper tones of men. Voices that lifted and fell in a wild, gay chanting through whose joyesses ran undertones both of sorrow and of anger--as though fairy weavers threaded through silk spun of sunbeams, somber strands dipped in the black of graves, and crimson strands stained in the red of wrathful sunsets.

He drifted on, scarce daring to breathe lest even that faint sound break the elfin song. Closer it rang and clearer; and now he became aware that the speed of his boat was increasing, that it was no longer drifting; as though the little waves on each side were pushing him ahead with soft and noiseless palms. His boat grounded, and as its keel rustled along over the smooth pebbles of the beach the song ceased.

McKay half arose and peered before him. The mists were thicker here but he could see the outlines of the coppice. It was like looking at it through many curtains of fine gauze, and its trees seemed shifting, ethereal, unreal. And moving among the trees were figures that threaded among the holes and flitted round them in rhythmic measures, like the shadows of leafy boughs swaying to some cadenced wind.

He stepped ashore. The mists dropped behind him, shutting off all sight of lake; and as they dropped McKay lost all sense of strangeness, all feeling of having entered some unfamiliar world. Rather was it as though he had returned to one he had once known well and that had been long lost.

The rhythmic flittings had ceased; there was now no movement as there was no

sound among the trees--yet he felt the little wood full of watchful life. McKay tried to speak; there was a spell of silence on him.

"You called me. I have come to listen to you--to help you if I can."

The words formed within his mind, but utter them he could not. Over and over he tried, desperately; the words seemed to die on his lips.

A pillar of mist whirled forward and halted, eddying half an arm-length away. Suddenly out of it peered a woman's face, eyes level with his own. A woman's face--yes; but McKay, staring into those strange eyes probing his, knew that, woman's though it seemed, it was that of no human breed. They were without pupils, the irises deer-large and of the soft green of deep forest dells; within them sparkled tiny star-points of light like motes in a moonbeam. The eyes were wide and set far apart beneath a broad, low brow over which was piled hraid upon hraid of hair of palest gold, braids that seemed spun of shining ashes of gold. The nose was small and straight, the mouth scarlet and exquisite. The face was oval, tapering to a delicately pointed chin.

Beautiful was that face, but its beauty was an alien one; unearthly. For long moments the strange eyes thrust their gaze deep into his. Then out of the mist were thrust two slender white arms, the hands long, the fingers touched his ears.

"He shall hear," whispered the red lips.

Immediately from all about him a cry arose; in it was the whispering and rustling of the leaves beneath the breath of the winds; the shrilling of the harp-strings of the boughs; the laughter of hidden brooks; the shoutings of waters flinging themselves down into deep and rocky pools--the voices of the forest made articulate.

"He shall hear!" they cried.

The long white fingers rested on his lips, and their touch was cool as bark of birch on cheek after some long upward climb through forest; cool and subtly sweet.

"He shall speak," whispered the scarlet

lips of the wood woman.

"He shall speak!" answered the wood voices again, as though in litany.

"He shall see," whispered the woman, and the cool fingers touched his eyes.

"He shall see!" echoed the wood voices.

THE mists that had hidden the coppice from McKay wavered, thinned and were gone. In their place was a limpid, translucent, palely green aether, faintly luminous—as though he stood within some clear wan emerald. His feet pressed a golden moss spangled with tiny starry bluets. Fully revealed before him was the woman of the strange eyes and the face of unearthly beauty. He dwelt for a moment upon the slender shoulders, the firm, small, tip-tilted breasts, the willow liteness of her body. From neck to knees a smock covered her, sheer and silken and delicate as spun cobwebs; through it her body gleamed as though fire of the young spring moon ran in her veins.

He looked beyond her. There upon the golden moss were other women like her, many of them; they stared at him with the same wide-set green eyes in which danced the sparkling moonbeam motes; like her they were crowned with glistening, pallidly golden hair; like hers, too, were their oval faces with the pointed chins and perilous alien beauty. Only where she stared at him gravely, measuring him, weighing him—there were those of her sisters whose eyes were mocking; and those whose eyes called to him with a weirdly tingling allure, their mouths athirst; those whose eyes looked upon him with curiosity alone; those whose great eyes pleaded, prayed to him.

Within that pellucid, greenly luminous aether McKay was abruptly aware that the trees of the coppice still had a place. Only now they were spectral indeed. They were like white shadows cast athwart a glaucous screen; trunk and bough, twig and leaf they arose around him and they were as though etched in air by phantom craftsmen—thin and unsubstantial; they were

ghost trees rooted in another space.

He was aware that there were men among the women; men whose eyes were set wide apart as were theirs, as strange and pupilless as were theirs, but with irises of brown and blue; men with pointed chins and oval faces, broad-shouldered and clad in kirtles of darkest green; swarthy-skinned men, muscular and strong, with that same lithe grace of the women—and like them of a beauty that was alien and elfin.

McKay heard a little wailing cry. He turned. Close beside him lay a girl clasped in the arms of one of the swarthy, green-clad men. She lay upon his breast. His eyes were filled with a black flame of wrath, and hers were misted, anguished. For an instant McKay had a glimpse of the hirth that old Polleau's son had sent crashing down into the boughs of the fir. He saw birch and fir as immaterial outlines around this man and this girl. For an instant girl and man and birch and fir seemed to be one and the same.

The scarlet-lipped woman touched his shoulder.

"She withers," sighed the woman and in her voice McKay heard a faint rustling as of mournful leaves. "Now is it not pitiful that she withers—our sister who was so young, so slender and so lovely?"

McKay looked again at the girl. The white skin seemed shrunken; the moon radiance that gleamed through the bodies of the others was still in hers but dim and pallid; her slim arms hung listlessly; her body drooped. Her mouth was wan and parched; her long and misted green eyes dull. The palely golden hair was lusterless, and dry. He looked on a slow death—a withering death.

"May the arm that struck her down wither!" said the green-clad man who held her, and in his voice McKay noticed a savage strumming as of winter winds around bleak boughs: "May his body decay and sun blast him! May rain and waters deny and may the winds scourge him!"

"I thirst," whispered the girl.

There was a stirring among the watching women. One came forward holding a chalice that was like thin leaves turned to green crystal. She paused beside the trunk of one of the spectral trees, reached up and drew down to her a branch. A slim girl with half-frightened, half-resentful eyes glided to her side and threw her arms around the ghostly hole. The woman cut deep with what seemed an arrow-shaped flake of jade and held her chalice under it. From the cut a faintly opalescent liquid dripped into the cup. When it was filled the woman beside McKay stepped forward and pressed her own long hands around the bleeding branch. She stepped away and McKay saw that the stream had ceased to flow. She touched the trembling girl and unclasped her arms.

"It is healed," said the woman gently. "And it was your turn, little sister. The wound is healed. Soon you will have forgotten."

The woman with the chalice knelt and set it to the wan, dry lips of her who was--withering. She drank of it, thirstily, to the last drop. The misty eyes cleared; they sparkled; the lips that were so parched and pale grew red, the white body gleamed as though the waning light within it had been fed with new.

"Sing, sisters," the girl cried, shrilly. "Dance for me, sisters!"

Again burst out that chant McKay had heard as he had floated through the mists upon the lake. Now, as then, despite his opened ears, he could distinguish no words, but clearly he understood its mingled themes--the joy of spring's awakening, rebirth, with green life streaming singing up through every bough, swelling the buds, burgeoning with tender leaves the branches; the dance of the trees in the scented winds of spring; the drums of the jubilant rain on leafy hoods; passion of summer sun pouring its golden flood down upon the trees;

the moon passing with stately steps and slow, and green hands reaching up to her and drawing from her breast milk of silver fire; riot of wild gay winds with their mad pipings and strummings; soft interlacing of houghs; the kiss of amorous leaves--all these and more that McKay could not understand since they dealt with hidden, secret things for which man has no images, were in that chanting.

And all these and more were in the rhythms of the dancing of these strange, green-eyed women and brown-skinned men; something incredibly ancient, yet young as the speeding moment; something of a world before and beyond man.

McKay listened; McKay watched, lost in wonder; his own world more than half forgotten.

The woman beside him touched his arm. She pointed to the girl.

"Yet she withers," she said. "And not all our life, if we poured it through her lips, could save her."

He saw that the red was draining slowly from the girl's lips; that the luminous life-tides were waning. The eyes that had been so bright were missing and growing dull once more. Suddenly a great pity and a great rage shook him. He knelt beside her, took her hands in his.

"Take them away! Take away your hands! They burn me!" she moaned.

"He tries to help you," whispered the green-clad man, gently. But he reached over and drew McKay's hands away.

"Not so can you help her or us," said the woman.

"What can I do?" McKay arose, looked helplessly from one to the other. "What can I do to help you?"

The chanting died, the dance stopped. A silence fell, and he felt upon him the eyes of all these strange people. They were tense--waiting. The woman took his hands. Their touch was cool and sent a strange sweetness sweeping into his veins.

"There are three men yonder," she said. "They hate us. Soon we shall all be as she is there--withering! They have sworn it, and as they have sworn so will they do. Unless--"

She paused. The moonbeam dancing motes in her eyes changed to tiny sparklings of red. They terrified him, those red sparklings.

"Three men?" In his clouded mind was dim memory of Polleau and his two strong sons. "Three men?" he repeated, stupidly. "But what are three men to you who are so many? What could three men do against those stalwart gallants of yours?"

"No," she shook her head. "No--there is nothing our-men--can do; nothing that we can do. Once, night and day, we were gay. Now we fear--night and day. They mean to destroy us. Our kin have warned us. And our kin can not help us. Those three are masters of blade and flame. Against blade and flame we are helpless."

"Blade and flame!" echoed the others. "Against blade and flame we are helpless."

"Surely will they destroy us," murmured the woman. "We shall wither--all of us. Like her there, or burn--unless--"

Suddenly she threw white arms around McKay's neck. She pressed her body close to him. Her scarlet mouth sought and found his lips and clung to them. Through all McKay's body ran swift, sweet flames, green fire of desire. His own arms went round her, crushed her to him.

"You shall not die!" he cried. "No--hy God, you shall not!"

She drew back her head, looked deep into his eyes.

"They have sworn to destroy us," she said, "and soon. With blade and flame they will destroy us--those three--unless--"

"Unless?" he asked, fiercely.

"Unless you slay them first!" she answered.

A cold shock ran through McKay, chilling the fires of his desire. He dropped his arm from around the woman; thrust her from him. For an instant she trembled be-

fore him.

"Slay!" he heard her whisper--and she was gone.

THE spectral trees wavered; their outlines thickened out of immateriality into substance. The green translucence darkened. He had a swift vertiginous moment as though he swung between two worlds. He closed his eyes. The dizziness passed and he opened them, looked around him.

He stood on the lakeward skirts of the little coppice. There were no shadows flitting, no sign of white women nor of swarthy, green-clad men. His feet were on green moss. Gone was the soft golden carpet with its hluets. Birches and firs clustered solidly before him.

At his left was a sturdy fir in whose needled arms a broken hirsch tree lay withering. It was the hirsch that Polleau's son had so wantonly slashed down. For an instant he saw within the fir and hirsch the immaterial outlines of the green-clad man and the slim girl withered! For that instant hirsch and fir and girl and man seemed one and the same. He stepped back, and his hands touched the smooth, cool bark of another birch that rose close at his right.

Upon his hands the touch of that bark was like--was like what? Curiously was it like the touch of the long slim hands of the scarlet lips!

McKay stood there, staring, wondering, like a man who has but half awakened from dream. And suddenly a little wind stirred the leaves of the rounded birch beside him. The leaves murmured, sighed. The wind grew stronger and the leaves whispered.

"Slay!" he heard them whisper--and again: "Slay! Help us! Slay!"

And the whisper was the voice of the woman of the scarlet lips!

Rage, swift and unreasoning, sprang up in McKay. He began to run up through the coppice, up to where he knew was the old lodge in which dwelt Polleau and his sons. And as he ran the wind blew stronger about him, and louder and louder grew the murmuring of the trees.

"Slay!" they whispered. "Slay them! Save us! Slay!"

"I will slay! I will save you!" McKay, panting, hammer pulse beating in his ears, heard himself answering that ever more insistent command. And in his mind was but one desire--to clutch the throats of Polleau and his sons, to crack their necks. To stand by them then and watch them wither--wither like that slim girl in the arms of the green-clad man.

He came to the edge of the coppice and burst from it out into a flood of sunshine. For a hundred feet he ran, and then he was aware that the whispering command was stilled; that he heard no more that maddening rustling of wrathful leaves. A spell seemed to have been loosed from him; it was as though he had broken through some web of sorcery. McKay stopped, dropped to the ground, buried his face in the grasses.

He lay there marshaling his thoughts into some order of sanity. What had he been about to do? To rush upon those three men who lived in the old lodge and--slay them! And for what? Because that unearthly, scarlet-lipped woman whose kisses he still could feel upon his mouth had bade him! Because the whispering trees of the little wood had maddened him with that same command!

For this he had been about to kill three men!

What were that woman and her sisters and the green-clad swarthy gallants of theirs? Illusions of some waking dream--phantoms born of the hypnosis of the swirling mists through which he had rowed and floated across the lake? Such things were not uncommon. McKay knew of those who by watching the shifting clouds could create and dwell for a time with wide-open eyes within some similar land of fantasy; knew others who needed but to stare at smoothly falling water to set themselves within a world of waking dreams; there were those who could summon dreams by gazing into a ball of crystal, others who found dream-life in saucers of shining ink.

Might not the moving mists have laid those same fingers of hypnosis upon his own mind?--and his love for the trees, the sense of appeal that he had felt so long, his memory of the wanton slaughter of the slim hirsch have all combined to paint upon his drugged consciousness the fantasies he had beheld?

McKay arose to his feet, shakily enough. He looked back at the coppice. There was no wind now; the leaves were silent, motionless. Reason with himself as he might, something deep within him stubbornly asserted the reality of his experience. At any rate, he told himself, the little wood was far too beautiful to be despoiled.

The old lodge was about a quarter of a mile away. A path led up to it through the ragged fields. McKay walked up the path, climbed rickety steps and paused, listening. He heard voices and knocked. The door was flung open and old Polleau stood there, peering at him through half-shut, suspicious eyes. One of the sons stood close behind him. They stared at McKay with grim, hostile faces.

He thought he heard a faint, far-off despairing whisper from the distant wood. And it was as though the pair in the doorway heard it too, for their gaze shifted from him to the coppice, and he saw hatred flicker swiftly across their grim faces. Their gaze swept back to him.

"What do you want?" demanded Polleau, curtly.

"I am a neighbor of yours stopping at the inn--" began McKay, courteously.

"I know you," Polleau interrupted brusquely, "but what is it you want?"

"I find the air of this place good for me," McKay stifled a rising anger. "I am intent upon staying for a year or more, until I feel myself fully recovered. I would like to buy some of your land and build upon it."

"Yes, M'sieu!" Acid politeness was now in old Polleau's voice. "But is it permitted to ask why you do not remain at your inn? Its fare is excellent and you are well liked."

[Concluded in our next issue]

TITANS OF SCIENCE FICTION

- HARRY BATES -

Interviewed by Julius Schwartz
and Mortimer Weisinger

Harry Bates was editor of the popular Clayton magazines, *Astounding Stories* & *Strange Tales*. Was born in Pennsylvania 32 years ago, but he looks 26. Is a very congenial, likeable chap and a regular fellow and not a dignified old graybeard, as is imagined by fans.

Attended Allegheny College and the University of Pennsylvania for one year each, but quit because "I could see no sense in paying other people money to see that I studied." Nevertheless, he is exceedingly well versed in the sciences.

Is an expert clock repairman and ex-mechanic. The clock repairing trade has been in his family for 92 years. Has a unique clock on the mantelpiece which he proudly claims could never be repaired by anyone other than himself.

The first magazine he edited was "The Beach Comber," 1922. He conducted a column giving advice to the lovelorn under the by-line of Yvonne Eclair. Once wrote a poem burlesquing the trial of a vendor arrested for selling salt water taffy on Sunday which was against the law. The town folk became so angry at this satire that he would have been thrown out of town if it weren't for his youth.

Wrote a one-act science fiction play, "Monkey Gland," a few years ago, which enjoyed a success with the Little Theatre Group in New York, and was later broadcast over the air. Announces that he is going in for play-writing at present.

Was editor of *World-Wide Adventures*, *Danger Trails*, *Astounding Stories*, *Strange Tales*, and *Soldiers of Fortune*. Spent a number of years as a reporter for a Philadelphia newspaper. Mr. Clayton had the idea of a science-fiction magazine in his mind for a long time, and one day he sug-

gested the idea to Bates. *Astounding Stories* was the result. One day, on the spur of the moment, Bates thought up a corking title for a magazine -- *Soldiers of Fortune*. Mr. Clayton was so impressed that plans were evolved for such a magazine, and Bates was made editor. It failed after a few issues.

Acquired his taste for science-fiction. He has done very little reading of contemporary science-fiction. He is kept posted on the movements of rivals by his authors. The first story he accepted for *Astounding* was Ray Cummings' "Phantoms of Reality." It wasn't a good story, and he knew it.

Bates expresses little hope for the re-appearance of *Astounding Stories*. Explains that *Astounding* started about two months before the stock crash. The circulation rose slowly but definitely until the last six months, when it suddenly zoomed down, deeming it inadvisable to continue publishing the magazine, as the lucrative returns did not compensate the risk and energy put into it. From 50 to 55 per cent of the 100,000 copies of *Astounding* published had to be sold to make the magazine profitable. Left-over issues were sent to England.

Was sorry to return stories already promised for publication to authors and adds: "Every single author to whom I had to return stories took the bad news splendidly, and they are all a bunch of great sports, without exception."

Claims that most s-f authors "considering the possibilities of their material, show a consistingly appalling lack of imagination. Which is probably due to the fact that most serial s-f work nowadays is hack-work."

His three favorite authors, personally, are Murray Leinster, Anthony Gilmore, and E. E. Smith. Will not reveal who Anthony Gilmore is, but admits that the two "well known" authors who write under

the name of Anthony Gilmore also write under the pseudonym of H. G. Winter. Is very evasive to further questions concerning the identity of Gilmore and states that only four people in the world, besides the two collaborators, know the true identity of Gilmore. He won't deny that he is one of the Gilmore team and promises to "tell all" in the near future.

Ku Sui, the villain of the "Hawk Carse" series, despite the ending of the last story, is not dead in the minds of authors, and he was to be a major character in a forthcoming three part serial, a sort of sequel to the Hawk Carse series. Bates revealed that La Grand Traverse, who was to have "The Man in the Bottle" in the March Astounding, is the nom-de-plume of an author whose name he thinks is "Keith."

Is proud of the fact that Countess von Kropff was a subscriber to Astounding and he is told that Countess von Zeppelin also subscribed to his excellent publication. Claims that 33 per cent of Astounding's readers are high school or college students, and 33 per cent more are technical men and skilled mechanics. Places the age of the average fan at 22 years. Enjoys his fan mail and is glad to say that he receives more letters than any other Clayton publication. He averages about 60 letters a month.

Has each volume of every magazine he ever edited attractively bound in blue cloth with gold embossing. He has quite a few technical books in his library, including David Lasser's "Conquest of Space." He likewise has complimentary volumes of Kline's "Planet of Peril," Leinster's "Murder Madness," and Cummings' "Brigands of the Moon."

Was against reprints because "Astounding Stories was a fan magazine and the majority of its readers read the stories asked for. Besides, the classics weren't good enough, especially in the sense of being modern enough, or didn't suit Astounding Stories' policy." Moreover he did not prefer to have Astounding run "second-hand, cold stories."

He has never read "The Moon Pool" but

keenly anticipates reading it. He likes A. Merritt's work and would like to have had him if he weren't tied up with Argosy. Refused to accept a Tarzan yarn by Burroughs because he thought it was too juvenile. He further said that he wouldn't have printed it even if Burroughs had offered it to him free. Claims that he enjoyed each of S. P. Wright's John Hanson stories.

He says that he is pretty sure that he has had "first look" at every science fiction story later published in the regular magazines, and yet he contends that Astounding never published a perfect story. Sixty-seven per cent of the stories he accepts are sent back to writers for revision, correction, or rewriting. Rejects most of his stories on the grounds that they are "uninteresting, hackneyed, or juvenile." Had consistently rejected Rousseau's stories during the past year or so because he thought Rousseau had hit a bad streak and couldn't seem to turn out an acceptable story.

Despairs that he cannot get enough good stories. Considers Diffin's "Power and the Glory" an off-trail story and one of the best he published. Prefers Wesso to illustrate for Astounding since he considers him "infinitely superior to all other artists." Bates vows he himself would never write for less than one cent a word. He twice rejected Dr. Dold's "Valley of Sin" which later appeared in Miracle Stories. Suggests many plots to authors. Suggested the plot of "Manape the Mighty" to his personal friend Arthur J. Burks. "Burks is a hack-writer," he said, "and he turns out some terrible stuff. But I make him write good stories for Astounding." Says that Burks can write 10,000 words in four hours on his typewriter, whereas Harl Vincent only writes 1,000 words a night.

Refers to Forrest J. Ackerman as the "greatest fan letter writer in the world," with Jack Darrow trailing close behind. He has detected plagiarized stories several times--has uncanny luck in spotting them. Instead of pressing the charges, he scares the offender and gives him another chance.

(turn to page 16)

SPILLING THE ATOMS

with Rap

That fellow Quitman is a soandso. He won't edit this column while I live. So, please pardon the false information. It was his fault...This month will be devoted to sensational exposes. First: June, 1930 and January, 1931 Astounding Stories had tales by C.D. Willard and Charles Willard Diffin. Close examination reveals the fact that these two authors are but one. So, it seems the phenomenon of a writer having two stories in one issue is not so rare as it has been supposed...

And now for the big news...Anthony Pelcher wrote three stories at regular intervals for Astounding before the debut of Anthony Gilmore - and none after that. Close comparison discloses the fact that their literary styles are markedly similar. Mr. Bates discloses the fact that Anthony Gilmore and H. G. Winter are one and the same. He also drops the fact that he himself had a hand in the pie. Winter's style compares almost exactly with both Pelcher and Gilmore. Mr. Bates then informs me that he gave Mort Weisinger and Julius Schwartz a swell 'bum steer.' Letting us know that Gilmore is Winter would be very puzzling -except for the presence of Mr. Pelcher. That explains why it was a 'swell' misinfore. (no, you won't find that word in the dictionary) But now the truth is revealed. Mr. Pelcher is the real identity of the mysterious Anthony Gilmore. And what's more Mr. Winter's real name is Anthony Pelcher. But why should a man use three names, and where does Mr. Bates fit in? First, a-long about January 1931, Mr. Pelcher decided he didn't like that name, so he changed it to Gilmore. He went over with a bang [just as did Pelcher]. Mr. Bates decided that he'd use more of his work. Of great significance are the facts that at no time do more than one of the three names appear in the same issue; nor does the total output exceed the amount considered as normal for a regular staff writer...And that, ladies and stfs gives this column credit for

the biggest scoop of the year...If Mr. Pelcher and Mr. Bates wish to deny the fundamental truth of the facts I have revealed, I welcome them, but it'll take more than a denial...

P. Enever is secretary of the Science Fiction Club recently organized in Middlesex, England....(by the way, will some English reader please define the middle sex to me?)JF Houghton, author of the Andromeda Menace, enjoys a yearly fishing trip off Boston Harbor...One of our alliterative readers reports that 'The Man Who Fought A Fly' fought a fine fight...Miles J. Breuer has a complete experimental laboratory. He got his idea of the story "The Gostak and the Doshes" from squinting at a curtain upon the window while he lay upon his lounge...Voting on the January JYPC story has begun. So far, Murray Leinster's "Fifth Dimension Tuhe" has the lead.... Missing! One \$180 mimeograph! The ISA will pay well for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the unscrupulous scoundrel who caused their machine to do a Houdini. Talk about the world's meanest old meany!...Stories by John S. Campbell and John C. Campbell have appeared in Wonder Stories. Which is the mistake?...Famous Last Words: "Give us your opinion of these improvements" January Astounding Stories...Wallace Wray Quitman got the idea for his soon-to-be-published Symphony of Death listening to Stokowski's Philadelphia Symphony....

A New Year's resolution: Read no more foreign science fiction, especially by Hield. If you have good ideas for science fiction stories but cannot put them into concrete form either due to lack of ability or lack of time, send them in to me. I will pay for each idea which becomes a 'sold' story... Next month, I will announce the winners in some of those contests...We wonder how many authors really wrote for Astounding. Already five of them have boiled down to two...A parting thought: won't it be a relief when children go marching about the house hissing silently in play warfare instead of shouting "Bang! Bang!".....

THE SCIENCE FICTION EYE

by Julius Schwartz

One of the exciting events in the magazine world is the news that Blue Book doubled its circulation with the running of "When Worlds Collide," the serial written by Edwin Balmer and Philip Wylie. Balmer is the editor of the Red Book, and supervises Blue Book. He thinks reducing the price of the latter magazine to 15 cents may have helped this phenomenal rise in circulation, but there is no doubt about the serial's powers of attraction. When asked to explain the appeal of the story, Balmer replied: "When I came to write it I thought pretty nearly everybody is sick of things as they are just now and would welcome a reorganization of the world. I imagined a break-up within the realm of possibility -- not a fantastic romance -- and the start of another world. I wrote it as if it might be the big item of tomorrow's newspaper." Stokes will put out the story in book form in February, and Paramount is doing the motion picture.

A. Merritt is suing Amazing Stories! He claims that "Beyond the Veil of Time," by B.H. Barney, which appeared in the Fall-Winter 1932 Amazing Stories Quarterly, contains whole sentences lifted bodily from his "The Moon Pool" and "The Face in the Abyss." Besides, such creations of Merritt as the Dream Makers were also pilfered by Barney from Merritt's stories. Barney claims that he never read any of Merritt's stories. Merritt doesn't care about the money part of it, he told me, but if he ever does a sequel to "The Snake Mother," as he intends to, new readers may suspect that he used the idea of "The Dream Makers" from Barney.

Manly Wade Wellman is writing and acting in a twelve-part play to be broadcast over the radio soon. It is to be a Wild West Thriller...James McCrae (17 years) has sold "Jac" to Amazing Stories...E. V. Kissie, another newcomer, has sold "Beyond the Focus" to the same magazine... "So A Leader," by Frederick Palmer, is a new novel of the future dealing with the com-

ing of a dictator in the United States... Boy's Chum, a five cent magazine, published by Bits Publishing Co. in South Lyon, Michigan, printed "Through Space to Venus," a fantastic serial, by Harold Smith about a year ago...

Their favorite stories: Edmond Hamilton likes "The Monster-God of Mamurth" and "The Pigmy Planet," while Stanton A. Coblentz thinks "The Blue Barbarians" and "The Sunken World" are his best. John Taine prefers "The Time Stream," and Victor Rousseau picks "The Sea Demons" and "Draft of Eternity." A. Merritt likes "The Ship of Ishtar," Arthur J. Burks "Scroll of Armageddon" (unpublished), and Dr. David H. Keller surprises by choosing "The Thing in the Cellar," a five page story that appeared in *Weird Tales* a year ago.

Watch for these Edmond Hamilton novels: "Vanishing Iron" in *Amazing*, "The Horror on the Asteroid," *Thundering Worlds*, *The Fire Folk*, *The Star Roamers*, and "The War of the Sexes," in *Weird Tales*, and "Kaldar world of Antares" and "Snake-Men of Kaldar" in *Magic Carpet*. Keep an eye on the monthly issues of *Mystery*, the magazine sold at Woolworth stores. The last issue contained "The Mummy," a version of the sciencifilm starring Karloff, in which he plays the role of the reincarnated mummy, Im-Ho-Tep. In the current issue the first half of "King Kong," the late Edgar Wallace's mystery sciencifilm. Sax Rohmer has weird scientific tales there regularly. "Too Many Ghosts," an excellent harlesque of the elf story, appeared there a few months ago...

M. G. M. will film "The Revolt of the Dead"...Ralph Milne Farley is having a series of anonymous articles in what magazines?... "Touring Utopia," by T. Russell, a review of Utopian ideas as set forth by essayists and novelists, was reviewed by Stanton A. Coblentz for the *N. Y. Times*... Jack Williamson will have "Invaders of the Ice World" in *Weird Tales*, and Donald Wandrei has sold "The Destroying Horde" to the same publication...

THE ETHER VIBRATES

by Mortimer Weisinger

Wonder Stories, you skeptics, has paid as high as seven cents per word for a single published story!...That unfounded rumor that Miriam Bourne will blossom forth with a new s-f mag may be dismissed as that much thin air, for Miss Bourne tells me she is now associated with the editorial board of "New Masses"...Harry Bates suggests writing to every author who appeared in Astounding to discover the identity of Anthony Gilmore...The office of Wonder Stories is adorned with Paul originals...Ed. Hamilton is only 28 and a graduate of Westminster College... "Messiah of the Cylinder" was once published in book form, and you can find Cummings' "Girl in the Golden Atom" in any published library...

Jack Darrow, my Chicago operative, who is closer than this with Farnsworth Wright and Sprenger of Weird, tells us that Jack Williamson, Cover Copper Extraordinary, will get two covers for his serial, "Golden Blood," scheduled to start in April...This serial reads like an H. Rider-Haggard novel and J. Allan St. John will do the covers...Weird Tales will soon resume the caption, "The Unique Magazine," on its covers...Stories returned by Bates to writers because Strange and Astounding have folded were submitted to Weird, with Wright accepting only one of them...A Chicago broadcasting station regularly gives etheric tales of stories from Weird...During one broadcast Otis A. Kline interviewed an Arab, after having one of his Dragoon stories read to the station tuner-iners... 'Monorail' and 'Smoke Rings,' by McLiciard, which appeared in the early issues of Amazing, originally were published in "The Lane Tech Prep," a Chicago high school monthly. Good work Jack..

Heworth once wrote a sciencefiction novel anent reincarnation labelled !!!... Farnsworth Wright used to pen poetry for Weird under the pseudonym of Francis Hard... When Burroughs referred to his secretary in his Argosy yarn, "The Pirates of Venus," he used his actual name, Ralph Rothmund

The "Teleport," described in that Farley yarn, "The Radio Menace," was displayed at South Milwaukee, 1930...Nick Kenny, the radio columnist for the Mirror, recently dedicated an entire radio program to A. Merritt, whom he boasts is his favorite author, so that the writer could obtain inspiration for his next thriller, a pirate novel... Believe it or Rip, but in 1927 Amazing Stories used to be glad to hand out free issues merely for the asking....

Hats off to A. Sigmund for his remarkable cover for the January Amazing... "Fingerprints Don't Lie!", a Dr. Bird yarn based on the Scientific Detective Monthly Cover Contest, will be incorporated into the forthcoming hook of Dr. Bird vs Saranoff shorts... Jack Williamson, who is a cowboy, corresponds with Dr. Keller... "The Stellar Express" and "The Sky Splitter" are two scientificlickers overlooked by that demon correspondent, Forrest J. Ackerman... James P. Olsen, who used to write for Astounding claims that each of his stories are arrived at by use of the "Genie Plotter"... The forthcoming series of science fiction satires by Nihil, a well-known author, will make you die--laughing!... The December Weird Tales contained only 128 pages instead of the usual 144...

The New York Daily Mirror recently conducted a contest centering about the actions of a person gifted with the power of invisibility, your modest scribe winning a prize by frankly admitting that he would rob a bank... The laboratory in the movie Sherlock Holmes is worth seeing... P. S. Miller, who holds a B. S. and an M. S. in chemistry from Union College has sold "The Tube, The Thing From the Shadow, and Jeremiah Jones, Scientist" to Amazing Hugo Gernsback, when editor of Amazing Stories, aired each of his editorials over WRNY... This column would see some real sensational stuff... if someone marooned the editor on Mars... "Phantoms of the Fire," by C.A. Smith was listed in the O. Henry Prize Collection for 1931... David Lasser peddles his own copies of "The Conquest of Space" to a New York store..

SCIENCE FICTION

SCRAP BOOK



compiled by Julius Schwartz

"The City of Endless Night" by Milo Hastings, published by Dodd in 1920.

Great changes have taken place on the earth's surface in the year 2150. The German Empire has been wiped out and all that was left of it was the roof of Berlin looming up to the height of 300 meters out of the bomb-torn desert that had once been Germany. The German people themselves now live underground -- three hundred million of them. It was an American engineer who, during one of his experiments, was by accident exploded into their domain and by a cunning strategy managed to live among them; to escape by submarine and by means of his knowledge to be instrumental in the overthrow of that stronghold and in the liberation of those millions. All the qualities that the Germans have been credited with before, during, and since the war are utilized in the story with satiric exaggeration.

-x-

Criticism

"Mr. Hastings has succeeded in interweaving into this book a love story that always escapes being bizarre, no mean accomplishment in a tale depicting a society 'that never was a land or sin' outside of the author's imagination."

- New York Times.

"People of the Ruins" by Edward B. Shanks published by Stokes in 1920

According to this "story of the English revolution and after" (sub-title) the revolution broke out in 1924. During its first skirmishes Jeremy Tuft, physicist, is overtaken by a bomb while inspecting a new scientific discovery. Thanks to the new ray he awakes from the shock and crawls out of his hole in the ground in the year 2074. into a ruined and degenerate world. Almost all traces of our civilization are gone and

the people are too ignorant and tired to restore what is left or to rebuild better. What is left is a ruling house in England, landlordism, and a degenerate industrialism in the north of England. In the ruler--an old Jew known as the "speaker"--however, some of the old ambition survives. The form it takes is the desire to reconstruct, with the aid of the oldest surviving mechanic, the one time efficient gun. Now Jeremy Tuft is pressed into his services and the gun becomes a fact. Immediately there is war and more disaster in which the Speaker, his daughter Eva and Jeremy, her lover, all go down to destruction together.

-x-

Criticism

"The author writes entertainingly, imaginatively and with a creative skill that makes his work pleasant, if not nutritious, reading."

- The Dial.

.. .. .

"The Awakening of Zojas," by Miriam Michelson published by Doubleday in 1910.

An outlaw, condemned to die, is induced by a scientist to drink a potion which places him in a trance for 100 years, at the end of which he awakens and directs the force that had made him so dreaded a criminal into channels of legitimate strife and action, and becoming powerful in bringing peace and order out of treachery and civil war. The story proves "that he that lives, and dies a criminal today, might have lived and died a martyr, a saint, a benefactor, had chance so willed it that his soul had found or might find its rightful place."

-x-

Criticism

"The essential note of variety has been struck in this tale."

- The Independent

.. .. .

"Miss Michelson is an adroit teller of tales."

- The Nation

THE TIME TATLER

by Forrest J. Ackerman

For over three years David H. Keller has written for a magazine under a nom-de-plume. So far he has had about sixteen stories printed. Up to the present none of the fans have suspected him as the author. ...Manley Wade Wellman copped first prize in Photoplay's Letter Department for Dec. Like Hal K. Wells, he is a movie man... Bob Olsen has written 'Clients and Dimensions.' Amazing Stories intends to use a new tale by J. Harvey Haggard, "Relativity to the Rescue"... It has been remarked that if Edmond Hamilton's stories are ever translated into Braille for the blind, they'll probably get cut fingers from the sharp pointed exclamation points!... Those hearing the nitely Tarzan serial are listening to jungle life speak for itself, for special sound equipment was transported to zoos to record the elephant's shrill trumpet, the cry of the bull-ape, and other beast sounds.

Scientifilm Snaps

I wonder how many of you realized that "Strange Interlude" carried you ahead in time to about the year 1945, starting as it did soon after the World War and lasting thru the characters' lifetimes. By everything that's sacred to stf, the aeroplane at the end of the picture should've been a helicopter or a rocket; but, apparently, the producers weren't futuristically minded... "Sherlock Holmes" has a shot of stf in it. In the new version, Doyle's famous detective invents a motor-stopping ray and gives an interesting little demonstration of how it will help police to stop criminals fleeing in fast automobiles.

"The Golem," scientifilm dealing with robots (reviewed on page 17) recently enjoyed a run as a play in Los Angeles... Weren't the last five minutes of "The Conquerors" thrilling? Or did you miss it? Richard Dix as grandson was speaking to Richard Dix, grandfather; "Why we shall have aeroplanes that will make trips across the Atlantic in three-two hours! Television! Other marvels!" and then dates were shown blending into one another: 1933-1934-1935

-1936-1937-1938--1950! and at that there flashed upon the screen the New York Metropolis of seventeen years hence -- a marvelous, towering electric-city with established air-lines tracing in and out and above the tops of the mountains of gleaming metal!

A short novelty has been released titled "Dr. Jekyll's Hyde"... And, incidently, Fredric March was given the award for the best male performance of 1932 as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in the stfilm of that name... Bela Lugosi is touring the country with a 40 minute version of his weirdy, "Dracula," already seen as both play and picture. His next, "The Whispering Shadow," he intends to make eclipse even "White Zombie" and his others... Boris Karloff's new shuddery, which was once titled "Im-Ho-Tep" and then was called "The Mummy Man," appeared simply as "The Mummy" when shown in New York...

A spectacular drama showing the horror and terrific dangers of wars of the future is in preparation at M-G-M. This unique yarn, doubtless to be most gigantic and amazing of all scientifilms, is laid in the year 1940. Diane Wynward will play the role of the feminine pacifist who seeks peace and to avert further tragedy altho the United States is embroiled in a bitter war. Philip Holmes will play the juvenile lead, and Lewis Stone and Hedda Hopper will appear in what must surely be one of the most unusual pictures of 1933. Adrian, the famous designer, is busily at work planning the costumes these characters of seven years hence are to wear.

Q. Are "King Kong" and "Creation" one and the same? David Stolaroff

A. Only in part. "Creation" was to be an entirely different story from "King Kong," but dealing with pre-historic animals. Originally, the giant ape did not figure in the story. Work got under way on "Creation," and then the plot was changed. The pre historic animal shots already made, then, were used in "King Kong."

SERVICE DEPARTMENT

conducted by Julius Schwartz

This month we continue the book list.

- B -

- Brown, John Young
To the Moon and Back in 90 Days - i
- Browne, Walter
2894; or, The Fossil Man - f
- Bruce, Muriel Mukara - lc
- Bulwer-Lytton, Edward
The Coming Race - c
- Burdekin, Katherine The Burning Ring
- C -
- Cabell, James Branch
The Cream of the Jest - r
- Capek, Karel
The Absolute at Large - sf
Krakatit - sf
Life of the Insects - ss
The Manufacture of the Absolute - sf
The Maxropulos Affair - longevity
R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots)-f
- Chambers, R. W. The Slayer of Souls - sf
- Chester, George R. The Jingo - lc
- Chester, Lord The Great Red Devil - w
- Chesterton, Gilbert K.
The Napoleon of Notting Hill - u
- Clock, H. and Boetzel, Eric
The Light in the Sky - lc
- Cobb, Weldon J. A Trip to Mars - i
- Coblentz, Stanton A. The Wonder Stick - p
- Cole, Cyrus The Aurophone - i
- Collins Valley of Eyes Unseen - lc
- Conquest, Joan
The Reckoning - creation of life
- Converse, Florence Into the Void - lp
- Cook, William W.
Adrift in the Unknown - i
Castaway at the Pole - sf
The Eighth Wonder - ?
Marooned in 1492 - tt
A Round Trip to the Year 2000 - tt
- Corelli, Marie
Ardath - r
The Devil's Motor; a Fantasy - sf
The Life Everlasting - r
The Mighty Atom - ?
A Romance of Two Worlds - i
The Secret Power - sf

(Continued Next Month)

Titans of Science Fiction

[continued from page 10]

Likens himself to a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. At home he is Jekyll while at the offices he is Hyde. He piles up his manuscripts, selecting the well-written ones from the trash. Then "I sit me back in me chair, put me feet on the desk, light me big pipe, and glean the best of the lot." A good story, whether by amateur or professional, will always be accepted. Clayton had to approve of any story before it was accepted. Inevitably, the story is sent back with suggestions for revision and corrected.

Amusedly relates of his experience with Ralph Milne Farley. It seems that Bates had recently turned down several of Farley stories because they were too juvenile. When Farley was in New York, he visited Bates asking why the latter considered all his stories too juvenile. For an hour Bates, speaking to him like teacher to pupil, told Farley what he meant by juvenile. Farley went away sadder, but wiser. A few weeks later Bates discovered that the man he had so nonchalantly berated was a former state senator, and an expert on ballistics!

Thought the UFA film, "The Rocket to the Moon," had a stupid plot, but thinks that the first real good interplanetary movie will be a "beauty and a huge success." At present he is collaborating with Wesso on an s-f cartoon strip which treats all phases of science fiction. Explains the removal of the Super Science from the cover of the magazine to the fact that there was not enough room on the cover, it being crowded enough as it was. Until now he was obliged to wear glasses. Says he is definitely through with magazine editing.

When he wanted a scientific expert for Astounding he put an ad in the New York Times and received 100 applications. He picked Carlyle Eliot because he thought he was as good as any of the others. Pessimistically predicts the doom of the twenty and twenty-five magazines, if this depression lasts much longer.

THE END

THE SCIENTIFILMS

by Forrest J. Ackerman

(Editor's Note: By popular request we are presenting this series of short synopses of various scientifilms which have appeared to date. Occasional previews of new films will accompany the series.)

"Our Heavenly Bodies,"

an UFA Wissenschaftlichen-film (short-? for stfilm), also run under the titles "Wonders of the Universe," "Destiny," and thru foreign translations. A review from the German reads:

"It is with a feeling of highest dramatic suspense and excitement that, from the center of a metropolis, we enter a fantastic ether ship, and then, equipped with all the latest technical efficiencies and the scientific knowledge of a highly cultured age, sail out into the realm of the stars. Solid bodies, yet floating in space, they glide by in an alarming monotony. We halt at Jupiter, at Mars, at one of the innumerable small stars, seeking the fabulous giants and dwarfs so often heard of. Then, the ether ship takes us high up to the fixed stars, and when the power of gravitation and attraction ceases, we see strange phenomena. The climax is reached when, in gripping mass scenes, we witness the death of the earth, first thru a period of ice, and then thru fire. Fire actually falls from the sky smashing the panic-stricken crowds of human beings and dissolving the entire earth into a mass of smoke and flames. Thus with merciless candour and logic of science the dark future of the earth is laid bare to us. When, at the end, we again see woods and meadows peacefully lying before us in the calmness of the evening twilight, this is seen with the eye of a man who knows and has witnessed the destiny of thousands of years."

The manuscript was by Hanns Walter Kornblum and Ernest Krieger.

"The Golem,"

a picture based on the novel by Gustav Meyrink (author of "Bal Macabre" in one of the recent issues of *Strange Tales*). The

cast included Albert Steinrueck, Paul Wegener, Otto Gehuehr, Lydia Samanova, and Ernest Deutsch. Was directed by Paul Wegener and photographed by Carl Freund, who is now in America to direct "The Invisible Man." The first mention of a mechanical man, which has found almost modern perfection in the vocally controlled robots now on display in New York Los Angeles, was made in it. The Golem, in the picture, symbolized, in a way, our present tanks, cannons, and machine-guns; and, like them, finally turned on its maker. A sort of Frankenstein plot.

"The Sky Splitter,"

released by W. W. Hodkinson Corp., directed by J. A. Norling and Ashley Miller. Story of a scientific projectile that traveled faster than light and showed how a man making the trip could visualize with the aid of a telescope events that happened years before.

-x-

"ISLAND OF LOST SOULS"

A snapshot scientifilm preview

It is said of this picture that it is doubtful that anything you've ever seen before will equal it; that nothing more eerie can be produced.

The H. G. Wells' - Paramount Scenario Department's tale takes you to the South Seas where, on an uncharted island, a discredited London surgeon is engaged in the fantastic business of speeding up the process of evolution. He is experimenting with electro-biology to produce from animals-human beings! Or the semblance of them, for altho Dr. Moreau's creations walk and talk, they do not look like humans.

Dr. Moreau's collection of evolutionized animals includes a bald-headed, snout-nosed creature who was once a hog, several wolf-men, a dozen "man-apes," and the famed panther-woman. "You shall walk upon two legs, not four!" he teaches them.

Such a situation makes room for many things to happen; and they do, especially when a normal man is cast ashore on this island. These happenings will not be recorded. SFD-TTT readers should see it.

Ray Beams And Flowers

Editor, Science Fiction Digest:

I had intended for some time to write you regarding your magazine but unfortunately the press of other work prevented me from so doing. I was glad to learn in one of your recent issues that you had combined with *The Time Traveller*. There doesn't seem to be any need or room for two such magazines. The combination seemed inevitable inasmuch as so many of the editorial staff was connected with both magazines.

I would like to take the opportunity of congratulating you and your staff on the magazine as it is now being issued. You are doing a good job and furnishing a much needed service for collectors of science fiction. I only wish the name, and of course the scope of the magazine was broad enough to include all stories in *Weird Tales*, and *Strange Tales*, and not merely the science fiction tales. Perhaps you intend to later, I hope so.

One of my pet aversions is Forrest J. Ackerman whose articles particularly those he ran in *The Time Traveller*, belong in some child's magazine. His juvenile style is most irritating and I wish someone would curb his letter writing tendencies. I dread to look at the reader's columns in the various magazines for fear of seeing one of his many effusions. As a shining example of some of his inane writing, the article he wrote in *Science Fiction* entitled "Super Science Satire" heads the list.

With best wishes, I am, Very truly yours,

H. Koenig,
New York, N. Y.

(We are sorry we cannot print the remainder of Mr. Koenig's pithy letter, but we are considering his suggestions. For explanation, let us state that although the masthead of *The Time Traveller* contained the names of members of our staff, the last two issues of that magazine, before it was taken over by us, was produced without the aid of that staff, with the exception of

Mr. Ackerman.

We are considering enlarging the field of our service, thereby covering the so-called "fantastic" magazines. For further information, we refer you to our editorials.)

Editor, Science Fiction Digest:

....Now for some criticism concerning your magazine. First I'll see what damage I can do with a few "hicks."

Toss one gently (?) at George Gray for his "pomes."

Hand the next to 'Chr' for his review of a book printed in German. Have him review books printed in English, there are a lot of them.

Weisinger gets the next for his articles "Our Science Fiction Magazines." They are just a waste of space.

And now come the noseays. Weisinger gets one for his column, "The Ether Vibrates." Also one to 'Rap' for his "Spilling the Atoms." Ackerman receives one for his *Scientifilm* articles. And you get one for your editorials, which are very interesting.

Sincerely,
Norman C. Caldwell
4008 18th Street
San Francisco, Calif.

(This letter, with the exception of the paragraph on 'Chr's' review, needs no commentation. In our estimation, there are a number of foreign books, science fiction, needless to say, that have never been translated into English. We feel that we are doing our readers a great service in reviewing these books.)

Dear Editor:

Why not give some credit where credit is due? How many authors have shown as much human interest in their stories as David H. Keller, M. D.? The answer is none. He stands in a class by himself. After all, the most important question is: how are these marvels of the future going to

affect PEOPLE? Will they be a success or not? Dr. Keller has answered these questions logically and they give you a more broadminded viewpoint on life as it will be.

He has shown in his "Revolt of the Pedestrians," his first story, how the constant use of automobiles will decrease the use of legs, and the disastrous results. In "Air Lines," "The Feminine Metamorphosis," and "The Psychophic Nurse" he has shown that the woman's place is in the home. He has shown where nature gets her revenge in "The Yeast Men" and others. Humorous masterpieces such as "The Flying Fool," "Free As The Air," "Half-Mile Hill," "The Moon Rays," and "Service First" have been excellent character studies.

Many other of his stories have been just plain science fiction, but among the best of this class are "The Conquerors," "The Time Projector" and "The Evening Star." Keller, who never copped a cover, seemed to try to very hard with "The Boneless" and "The Human Termites."

He has written some short weird stories, also, among which "The Little Husbands," "Seeds of Death," "The Thing In The Cellar," and "The Tailed Man of Cornwall" rank highest.

But his real superior ability is in his character sketches. You can tell by reading his stories that he has a profound knowledge of human nature, and a marvelous insight of the human soul. His stories are psychological, and psychology is as much of a science as chemistry, biology, or physics. And Dr. Keller is a psychologist.

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Editor, SFD:

Your combined fan magazine for sfers is perfectly splendid; and the X-mas number is the best yet.

In the way of editorials, might I suggest that you do something to get artist Muller back into Amazing Stories? The new type cover done by Sigmund is great, but it is plain to be seen, in spite of comments made by its editorial staff, that Muller is wanted.

Rap's and Weisinger's columns are interesting, and Mr. Ackerman's Time Tatling satisfies all desires, what with its news, its (may I coin a new one?) scientific bits of fun, and scientific forecasts.

Would like to read something about Austin Hall in addition to the authors others have requested.

Aren't you going to continue the list of stf printed in Old Argosys, All-Stories, etc? And "Science Fiction on the Air" -- that broadcast of the future that Mr. Ackerman was 'conducting' -- it didn't seem to me it was concluded in the original TTT. Isn't there more?, more authors introduced, speeches given, things happening in the 'Studio?'

Enthusiastically,

Allis Vilette

Alherta, Canada

(We really cannot influence the editorial policy of Amazing Stories. If the readers really want Muller's illustrations to appear in Amazing they should continue to let the editorial staff know their wishes.

What are our readers wishes in regard to the re-appearance of Mr. Ackerman's "Science Fiction on the Air"?

When the book list is finished we will present an index of Argosy's sfiction.)

[A certain well-known, and well-loved science-fiction author sent in the following advertisement, in the form of a letter. He prefers that the letter remain unsigned. However, should some fan desire to know the author's identity, you may venture a guess, and if you enclose a stamped card or envelope we'll let you know how correct you are

- The Publishers]

To all my Science Fiction Friends:

In a recent conversation with the editors of the Science Fiction Digest I was told that my stories had given pleasure to many readers. So cordial was this expression of appreciation that it seemed well worth while to thank all of you for your kind thoughts of me and my literary children.

I want to thank you for reading these stories. Too nearly five years they have appeared in *Amazing Stories*, *Weird Tales*, and *Wonder Stories*. At times they have been sharply criticized, at others they have been rewarded with kindly praise, at no time have they been ignored. Apparently many readers have followed the adventures of my heroes and heroines through life's ordeals and have found in their lives a means of escape from the harsh actualities of humdrum existence.

Mainly these stories have been written in a kindly vein. As far as could be the characters were real people struggling with real problems in life and finding real solutions to these problems. They have tried to find happiness just as we all should try and find it, in simpler living and closer adaptation to the basic laws of biological existence.

Some of my critics have accused me of preaching. I admit that I want to do what I can to make the world a better place to live in--if in a story I can point the way to

happiness I want to do so. And I am more interested in writing of the effort of an individual to send his soul to the stars than I am in the dreamer's interplanetary journey of the individual's body to the stars.

Always I have written for the pleasure of the writing, trusting that here and there there would be readers who would secure equal pleasure from the reading. And always I have tried to write worth while prose, with good language and clear thought --something that might pass as literature if the critic was friendly.

And in this writing I have been inspired by the ladies of my house, my wife and three daughters. You have met them all, again and again in my tales: without their inspiration the stories would have been impossible. My wife, editorially and spiritually, deserves much of the credit for whatever success I may have attained.

Thus, in closing, I wish to thank all of you for your kind thoughts--And I wish you in 1933 and all the years to come the best gift of life, which is not financial prosperity, great wealth, or wide fame; but a deep-seated happiness which can only come to us through a love for humanity and a constant service to those less fortunate than we are--

And so, with best wishes I Remain

Your Friend --

Classified Advertisements

FOR SALE

Astounding science fiction books: "A Journey in Other Worlds," John Jacob Astor; "Krankatit," a fantastic story of atomic power by Karel Capek: "Vanishing Men," by G. MacLeod Winsor, author of "Station X," and a bizarre story of the future by Charlotte Haldane "Man's World." Julius Schwartz, 407 E. 183rd St., New York, N.Y.

Any book by Edgar Rice Burroughs, in excellent condition, 30 cents. Mortimer Weisinger, 297 Lexington Av., Passaic, N.J.

I have sold practically all of my extra fantasies by my SFD ad, and now have only a few stf tales, some new ones offered, to list: A World of Indexed Numbers, McMorrow; The Storm that had to be Stopped, Leinster; An Alihi from the Ether, Garret Smith; Phantom in the Rainbow, LaMaster and a few others. Copies of Miracle Stories. Send stamp for complete list and prices. Forrest J. Ackerman, 530 Staples Av., San Francisco, California.

WANTED

All back issues of Strange Tales. Also back issues of Weird Tales. Philip Bridges, 475 Grand, Leonia, N. J.

All parts of "Darkness and Dawn" and "Messiah of the Cylinder" except the last. Also "The Conquest of Mars" "The Afterglow;" issues of Black Cat magazines and 1923-1924 Weird Tales are wanted. Julius Schwartz, 407 E. 183rd St., New York, N.Y.

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